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**The Iowa Blind History Archive  
History of Blindness in Iowa - Oral History Project  
Interview with [Name]  
Conducted by [Name]  
[Date]  
Transcribed by [Name]**

**NOTE: Any text included in brackets [ ] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.**

**David Lenz, 55, Cumberland, Iowa  
Karla Ice  
Iowa Department for the Blind Building in Des Moines, Iowa  
October 2, 2010, 2:50 PM**

**Karla Ice: This is Karla Ice and I am interviewing David Lenz. The recording is being taken at the Iowa Department for the Blind Building in Des Moines, Iowa on Saturday, October 2, 2010 at about 2:50 in the afternoon. And, I'll now**

**read you this statement. All stories submitted to this project will become a part of the History of Blindness Collection owned by the Iowa Department for the Blind. By submitting your story, you are acknowledging that your story is a gift, which transfers to the Iowa Department for the Blind, all legal title, all literary property rights. You will be granting to the Iowa Department for the Blind an unrestricted license to use your recording and all the information which it contains in any manner the Department for the blind may wish to use it, for as long as the Iowa Department for the Blind wishes to use it. Do you agree to have your story recorded?**

**David Lenz: Yes, I do.**

**Ice: And, now would you please give me your name, your age and where you live.**

**Lenz: My name is David Allen Lenz. I am 55 and I live in Cumberland, Iowa. I currently work for the Iowa Department for the Blind as the Employment Specialist.**

**Ice: Okay, thank you. And, then what is it that you would like to tell us about today?**

**Lenz: Well, everybody tells me I have an interesting story about how I went blind. It is probably one of the most unique stories in the world as far as that goes. I was three years old and I lived in Taylor County down in Southern Iowa. I lived on a farm. My brother and I were playing outside and he had one of these dart guns that had a suction cup in it and he had lost the suction cup. He had put a big**

**spiked nail in it. He was shooting at a tree and it wouldn't go off. He left it laying on the step and went inside; my brother was like seven years older than I was. So, I picked it up when he went inside and looked down the barrel and the nail went off and it shot me in the left eye. That eye is a prosthetic eye now.**

**When I was ten years old the same brother and I were; we were living in Corning, Iowa at the time. The same brother and I were outside. I had a friend with me and he had a friend with him. I was ten and he was, like, seventeen. He was in the garage and his friend and we were arguing and fighting. I picked up a wooden croquet ball and threw it at him and I broke a switch by his head. He got really mad so he chased me and the other kid into the house. We went upstairs and we pushed an old iron bed and a dresser against the door to keep him out. He forced the door open and we put a block of wood in there, and I went over and I was going to kick the block of wood out, and he had a slingshot. He was shooting at me to keep me back and he shot me in the other eye.**

**So, then I was...I had at that time, I had light perception. I was halfway through fourth grade and I didn't go to school...this happened in January of '65. I didn't go to school the rest of that year.**

**That fall I had light perception and stuff. At that time we had to go to Vinton to school. There was no going to public school since I had no sight at the time. They wanted me to learn Braille.**

**We were a very poor family. We lived in Southwest Iowa and my mother...my father had died when I was four years old. So, anyway, I went to school there.**

**At that time, when you went to school they picked me up on Labor Day and the only time you got to go home then was Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and summer. The only times you got to go home. That's when I went home when I first started there. Then after a while they started a bus system at Vinton where they brought the; bussed the kids home during the school year. I started school there. I got along pretty well after a while. I started learning Braille and time went on there in Vinton. About fifteen I was sitting in the audience of a music recital and I was arguing with a young man and he hauled off and punched me in the eye. About two months later my sight came back. So, I'm seeing, right now I see about 20/300.**

**(End of Recording 1)**

**5:12**

**(Beginning of Recording 2)**

**Lenz: So, my sight came back to me then. I've told this story to a lot of people over the years and stuff. I tell them that getting my sight back was just as bad as losing my sight. Nobody could believe me that that's true. Nothing worked. You'd trip over stuff. You'd fall down. You'd run into people until I got glasses and got used to it. It was something. I had just as much trouble getting my sight as I did losing it, because I had just been five years being totally blind. I went everywhere without a cane. I ran. I was pretty rambunctious and a pretty active person when I went to school. It was just as difficult when I got it back. It was like two traumas that I had to go through and stuff. That is probably one of the more unusual, three accidents,**

**two bad, one good, that anybody's ever had in losing their sight and getting some of it back.**

**I always tell people I was going to the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School at the time. Actually, it deserves its name. I did get my sight back. It was a lot of fun going to school there and stuff. I had a lot of good memories. I grew up there basically. I went to high school; all my friends were there at the time.**

**When I got out of high school I went to college in Kirkwood. I went down there for a couple of years; went to Food Service School. I got out of there and I was down in Corning again. My brother had a job opening at a restaurant. It was like two bucks an hour to cook or I could go and shovel concrete for six dollars an hour. So, I tell you, I never went to cooking; I never cooked professionally. I went straight to construction most of the '70s.**

**In the '80s I went back to school to be a horticulturist and stuff. I ran a greenhouse and landscaping company for a lot of the '80s.**

**After I got that started I went to work for a small college called Universal Technical Institute in Omaha, as a recruiter. I worked for them and I ran the greenhouse, too, and landscaping business. I did both at the same time. Most of my recruiting was done during the winter. They gave me a lot of flexibility during the spring, when they didn't need as much recruiting done, to run the greenhouse. They really wanted to hit it hard in the fall and in the winter. That worked well for me.**

**When I was working for them I got an interview with the Department. I started as a Rehab. Teacher and then I transferred to a Counselor and then to an Employment Specialist. I've been here eighteen years. So, actually I've**

**only worked for three companies in my life. It's kind of a...That's how the employment goes as far as I've ever done. Now, I just mainly work with people and help them develop jobs, and working with employers and finding jobs, and working at finding the hidden job market.**

**I have a lot of stories about working here and people and individuals and stuff. I'll probably do another; I'll talk to Shan and do it another time. I just wanted to kind of tell that story today.**

**Ice: Yes.**

**Lenz: It's an unusual story.**

**Ice: It certainly is. Well, thank you very much for sharing that.**

**Lenz: Thank you.**

**3:57**

**(End of Recording 2)**

**Deb Brix**

**June 26, 2011**